

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 BOGOTA 002773

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AMGT](#) [ASEC](#) [OTRA](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: COUNTRY CLEARANCE GRANTED FOR DEMINING PAV

REF: SECSTATE 41332

1. Country clearance is granted for Allan Schnabel, John Jordan, Stephen Meyer, and Harry McCloy to travel to Bogota April 4-8 2005. Purpose of the visit is to assess the humanitarian demining situation in Colombia. Travelers are requested to advise control officer ASAP if visit is canceled or changed.

2. Travelers to the capital city of Bogota may require some time to adjust to the altitude (8,600 feet), which can adversely affect blood pressure, digestion, sleep and energy level. Inability to sleep through the night is especially common. Most people, even those who are healthy and fit, feel some symptoms of hypoxia (lack of oxygen) upon arrival in Bogota. Persons with medical conditions related to the circulatory or respiratory systems (high blood pressure, history of coronary heart disease, emphysema, for example), and anyone with sickle cell anemia, should ask their physician if travel to Bogota or other high-altitude locations is advisable. U.S. government employees who do not have a Class I medical clearance are requested to check with M/MED before planning travel to Bogota. Diamox, a medication commonly prescribed to aid with acclimatization, is not generally required for travel to Bogota. However, it is advisable to limit physical activity and drink plenty of non-alcoholic beverages for the first two to three days after arriving in Bogota.

3. Control officer for this visit is Pol Officer Dana Brown, (h)571-621-7981, (cell) 57-310-584-8576, POL direct line is 011-571-315-2129 (from US, no need of prefix once in Bogota), office extension is -2563. POL fax number is (571) 315-2163. The embassy is located at Calle 22D-BIS, No. 47-51. Embassy after-hours telephone (direct to MSG Post One) is (571) 315-2452.

4. Reporting Requirement: Embassy Bogota is in an area with at least three operating foreign terrorist organizations. Security is the concern of all employees. Therefore, all TDY personnel are required to report any suspicious activity or actual incidents to the Regional Security Office or the agency/office sponsoring their visit as soon as possible. In all cases this will be done prior to the departure from Colombia of the TDY person or group.

5. Airport Arrivals/Transportation Services: Do not use local taxis or buses when arriving at the airport. The following transportation arrangements have been made for your arrival: Dana Brown and an expediter will meet the travelers at airport and arrange all transportation.

6. Hotel reservations have been made at the Andino Royal on Calle 85, 12-28 in Bogota, phone number 571-651-3100. Room rate is within per diem and includes breakfast. Confirmation numbers are Schnabel 108367, Jordan 100369, Meyer 100370, and McCloy (vice Harris) 100368.

7. Passports and visas: All official visitors traveling on a diplomatic or official passport must have a diplomatic or official visa, respectively. All U.S. Government employees or military personnel traveling on official business must use official or diplomatic passports with appropriate visas. All contract employees using a tourist passport must have a work visa. Departure tax from Bogota is USD 51.00 for holders of tourist passports who stay less than 60 days and USD 30.00 for holders of diplomatic and official passports regardless of length of stay.

8. Current security assessment:

A. Terrorism: Colombia is considered a high-threat environment. U.S. Government personnel can be considered targets by terrorist organizations. Personal and official travel outside Bogota to other locales in Colombia is strictly regulated by the embassy (see para 8). Visitors must exercise prudence and good judgment to minimize risks and vulnerabilities. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) consider Plan Colombia a "Declaration of War" and have declared certain categories of USG personnel as legitimate targets. Threats may also derive from paramilitaries and narcotics traffickers.

B. Crime: Crime can be a serious problem for visiting personnel. Street crimes such as purse-snatching,

pick-pocketing, and fraud schemes are the most prevalent type of incident in which TDY personnel are involved, although violent crime and attempted carjackings also affect USG personnel sporadically. In hotels, it is recommended that room safes or the hotel safe be used to store valuables. High-value items (jewelry, cameras, unnecessary credit cards, etc.) should be left at home. Luggage and attache cases (including laptop computers) should never be left unattended, even briefly, at the airport or in public areas. When traveling in a vehicle, ensure the doors are locked and the windows rolled up.

**1C. Public Transportation:** Post policy prohibits the use of commercial buses. If taxis are utilized, ensure the hotel/restaurant calls a taxi. Avoid hailing one on the street. Never share a cab with an unknown person (including the driver's "brother/son/cousin, etc."). Ensure the meter is working or agree upon the fare prior to entering the vehicle.

**1D.** As a general matter TDY personnel are not/not authorized to bring firearms into the country. Those employees who believe they have a need for firearms should contact the Regional Security Office well before the visit.

**19.** Approval for country clearance is limited to those deemed mission essential. Those granted clearances are required to abide by the same restrictions placed on all U.S. personnel at the embassy. This includes prior clearance by the RSO and DCM for any RPT any personal or official travel outside of Bogota or any other TDY site.

**110.** Security briefings for Temporary Duty (TDY) Personnel are held on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 0930 to 1030 in the Public Affairs Conference Room on the 2nd floor on the North side of the Embassy. After the briefing, TDY employees will be issued an Embassy identification card valid for the length of their assignment. If an Embassy identification badge expires based on an initial TDY country clearance for Colombia, a new Embassy badge may be reissued upon presentation of an updated country clearance for Colombia. TDY employees who will be in country for 14 calendar days or less will not be issued an Embassy identification card.

**111. Laptop Computers, PDAs, Cameras**

A) All personnel must declare all cameras, personal computers, including laptop and palm pilots, on the Colombian Immigration Form. List these items in the "Traveler's Cash, Bonds and Luggage Declaration - Entry" area of the form. The airline flight attendant provides this form to you prior to your arrival in Colombia. You must submit the original copy to the Colombian customs authorities before leaving the airport. Please keep the carbon copy of this form, as you will be asked for it when you leave.

B) USG laptops/palm pilots/cameras may not be brought into the Embassy without the prior approval of the Regional Security Office. Personally owned laptops/palm pilots may not/not be utilized inside the Embassy. USG-owned laptops may only be used in controlled access areas (CAA - i.e., areas where classified information is discussed, processed or stored) if the user certifies that the computer has been under the personal control of a cleared American throughout transit. If this requirement is not met, the laptop can only be utilized outside of the CAA. USG-owned palm pilots are under the same restrictions as cellular phones, and may not be utilized within a controlled access area. USG laptops/PDAs may not be connected in any way to a Department of State computer system.

**112. Health and Medical:** No special inoculations or medical precautions are necessary for temporary travel to Bogota. Water and food are safe in the city's better restaurants, but avoid eating at small roadside stands as food preparation standards may be questionable. The embassy recommends drinking bottled water (although tap water in Bogota proper is considered safe) and avoiding raw fish or seafood. Yellow fever vaccine is not required but the embassy and the CDC recommend that travelers receive vaccine if going to the middle valley of the Magdalena River, eastern and western foothills of the Cordillera Oriental from the border with Ecuador to that with Venezuela, Uraba, the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, eastern plains, and Amazonia. They should carry their inoculation record and have the date of a current yellow fever vaccine recorded in it. While there is no malaria risk in Bogota, there is risk in all rural areas at altitudes less than 800 meters. Use of prophylactic drugs is recommended.

**113. Climate:** Due to the altitude, Bogota's weather is generally cool and temperatures range from 50 degrees Fahrenheit at night to 70 degrees during the day. Rain showers occur frequently. Sweaters and light jackets are recommended. Dark suit and tie for men and comparable dress for women are appropriate. Contact the sponsoring office for

local climate conditions should the TDY be performed outside of Bogota.

14. Exchange Facilities: Banking and ATM services are located in the Embassy. Personal checks are accepted and receive a 5 percent higher exchange rate than currency. The current exchange rate for checks is approximately 2,300 pesos for one dollar although the rate varies daily. Visa and Mastercard are accepted at most restaurants and stores. However, credit card fraud is common and the Embassy recommends not using them unless necessary.

15. Additional information may be obtained at the Embassy website: [HTTP://USEMBASSY.STATE.GOV/COLOMBIA](http://usembassy.state.gov/colombia).  
WOOD